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United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines* for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

Form 10-900a). Type all entries.			
Name of Property			
nistoric name Col Alto			
ther names/site number DHL # 117-	3		
. Location			
reet & number Nelson & Spottsw	ood Drive	N/A	not for publication
ty, town Lexington		N/A	vicinity
ate Virginia code VA	countyindepende		zip code 24450
Classification			
wnership of Property Ca	itegory of Property	Number of Resour	ces within Property
grivate X] building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
] public-local	district	4	1 buildings
public-State	site		sites
public-Federal	structure		structures
	object		objects
	•	4	1 Total
ame of related multiple property listing:		Number of contrib	uting resources previously
N/A		listed in the Nation	•
State/Federal Agency Certification	<u> </u>		
Signature of centifying official VA Department of Historic Ro			9/29/89 Date
State or Federal agency and bureau			
In my opinion, the property meets	does not meet the National i	Register criteria. See co	ntinuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official			Date
State or Federal agency and bureau			
National Park Service Certification			
ereby, certify that this property is:			
entered in the National Register.			
See continuation sheet.			
determined eligible for the National			
Register. See continuation sheet.			
determined not eligible for the			
National Register.		<u>,</u>	
removed from the National Register.			
other, (explain:)			
	Signature	of the Keeper	Date of Action

6. Function or Use			
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)		
Domestic: Single Dwelling	Domestic: Single Dwelling		
Domestic: Secondary Structures	Domestic: Secondary Structures		
7. Description			
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)		
	foundation <u>Brick</u>		
Georgian/Classical Revival	walls Brick		
	roof <u>Metal</u>		
	other		

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

COL ALTO

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

Col Alto occupies a seven-acre tract atop a hill on the eastern edge of the old part of Lexington. Originally part of a large plantation, the surrounding lands have been developed with residential and commercial structures over the years. The focal point of the property is a brick, two-story Classical Revival mansion of formal architectural character which has been enlarged enlarged with additions by various owners. The resulting structure thus reflects regional architectural tastes for period of over a century. The original section, though modified, retains its architectural integrity, preserving the basic original plan and much its original woodwork. An important later element is the Palladianstyle veranda designed by William Lawrance Bottomley. Located on the grounds are formal gardens and several outbuildings including a small barn, a log cabin, a modern, non-contributing single-family residence, and an arcaded garage. The present layout of the grounds was designed by landscape architect Rose Greely in the 1930s, incorporating many early trees in the park-like front lawn.

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

1827, the original portion of the Col Alto residence is a twostory, double-pile, three-bay structure laid in Flemish bond on the principal elevations. It is crowned by a full entablature with a dentil molding, above which is a hipped roof. The architectural style of formal Georgian in character but with somewhat freely interpreted classical detailing typical of fine houses in the Valley Virginia dating from the early decades of the 19th century. highlight of the facade is a handsome three-part fanlight doorway with intricate tracery and Ionic colonettes. The elegant I sheltering the entrance is a 1934 reworking of the original Ionic porch porch. original columns were reused but raised on short pedestals. Also the original straight-fronted roof was replaced with one with an entablature of similar character but with concave corners. As part of the same alterations the second-floor window sash on either side of the center bay was replaced with French doors; the original frames were retained.

Certifying official has considered the significance of this proper nationally	erty in relation to other properties: statewide locally	
Applicable National Register Criteria A XB XC	D	
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	□D □E □F □G	
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture	_1827-1939	1827
Politics		<u></u>
	Cultural Affiliation	
	_N / A	
A		
Significant Person nes McDowell, Henry St. George Tucker.	Architect/Builder	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

Col Alto's stately Classical Revival house with its numerous additions and handsome grounds is one of several important early residences surrounding the historic community of Lexington and is significant as an example of the type of home favored by the region's leading families for over a The house is also significant for its associations with two of the area's most prominent citizens: James McDowell (1795-1851), the house was built, and Henry St. George Tucker (1853-1932), whose family has a long tradition of distinguished service to the state and nation. Completed in 1827, Col Alto's design is attributed to the local amateur architect, Samuel Reid McDowell, McDowell's first-cousin. James McDowell represented Rockbridge County in the Virginia General Assembly and served as governor from 1847 to 1849. In 1898 Col Alto was purchased by Henry St. George Tucker, dean of the Washington and Lee University law school and later acting president of the university. From 1921 until his death represented the district in Congress. Tucker's daughter, Rosa Tucker Mason, who purchased Col Alto in 1932, commissioned the prominent New York architect William Lawrence Bottomley to design one of the most striking features of the house, a Palladian-style veranda which well illustrates Bottomley's sure grasp of the Classical vocabulary. The present layout of Col Alto's grounds, an important example of 1930s taste in landscape design, is the work of Rose Greely, the first student to receive a certificate in architecture from the Cambridge School, in 1919.

JUSTIFICATION OF CRITERIA

Col Alto is qualified for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria B and C. It is eligible under Criterion B because of its association with two men of significance in state and national politics: governor and congressman James McDowell and congressman Henry St. George Tucker. Under Criterion C Col Alto is eligible because it represents a significant antebellum Virginia house type and because it is

	•
	[W] On a continuation of the A
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	X See continuation sheet
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)	Primary location of additional data:
has been requested	X State historic preservation office
previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
previously determined eligible by the National Register	Federal agency
designated a National Historic Landmark	Local government
recorded by Historic American Buildings	University
Survey # recorded by Historic American Engineering	Other
Record #	Specify repository: VA_Division_of_Historic_Landmarks
1100010 11	Richmond, VA
10. Geographical Data	Recommend 4 471
Acreage of property approximately seven acres	
UTM References	
A 1 7 6 3 7 4 6 0 4 1 8 2 3 9 0 Zone Easting Northing	B Zone Easting Northing
	D
	See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description	
Beginning at the southern corner of the inter	section of Nelson and Spottswood Streets;
proceed southeast 600 feet along the southern	
proceed southwest 600 feet along the northern	
Stonewall Jackson Hospital, then proceed nort	
proceed along the southern right-of-way of Sp	ottswood Street to the point of beginning.
Boundary Justification	
The nominated acreage includes the house, out	buildings and gardens historically
associated with Col Alto that retain integrit	y.
g	•
	See continuation sheet
11 Form Dropped Dr.	
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title <u>Calder Loth and John Salmon</u> organization <u>VA Division of Historic Landmarks</u>	date August 1988
street & number221 Governor Street	telephone (804) 786-3143
city or town Richmond	state VA zip code 23219

9. Major Bibliographical References

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The first major additions to the house were a large three-part or "Scottish" dormer to the roof, a square stair tower on the rear and a wing containing a dining room, both added before 1877. Further additions were made to the rear in 1898 and 1910, mostly containing service areas. In the early 1930s, the then owner, Rosa Tucker Mason, engaged the prominent New York architect, William Lawrence Bottomley to make further additions and modernizations. Bottomley added more service areas to the rear and dressed up two projections on the south side with pediments. The front porch and second-story windows were modified as noted above. Bottomley also removed the top of the stair tower and a large, mid-19thcentury, three-bay dormer was taken off front slope of the roof. Although interesting, the tower and dormer were thought by Bottomley not to be in keeping with the classical character of the house. The most conspicuous of Bottomley's additions is a spacious, architecturally dramatic veranda which replaced a 1910 wooden porch on the north side. The veranda is pure Palladian in concept, consisting of three arches supported on paired brick columns. Circular openings above the columns add to the Palladian effect. The whole piece is unusually sophisticated and an important element of the historic fabric of the house.

entrance hall, somewhat off center so that the room on the south side is smaller than that on the north. Behind the entrance hall, in a passage framed by an arched opening, was originally located the stair. This was removed when the rear stair tower was added. The stair there continues to serve as the main stair and winds in a gentle elliptical curve to the second story. The two large rooms to the north of the entrance hall are treated as double parlors with a handsome fan-light arched opening between them. The opening retains original wide doors. Most of the original mantels throughout the oldest section are in place and are typical of the region being somewhat boldly provincial interpretations of sophisticated Federal mantels. The double-parlor mantels have heavy scrolled consoles above columns. The mantel in the small room to the south of the entrance has a six carved leaves in a radiating pattern in the central patera. The doorways and window frames on the first floor have turned corner blocks and symmetrical architrave trim. The second-floor doorways and window frames have mitered frames. The various rooms in the additions are mostly treated with Federalrevival type woodwork. The paneled chimneypiece in the present / dining room was added by Rosa Tucker Mason and may have been salfaved from an early house in the ares. The service areas generally retain the # flavor

The interior of the original portion of the house consists of a large

Existing buildings on the the grounds include a log cabin of uncertain age but probably older than the main house. It was used in the past as a servant's house but is currently a rental unit. The small wood-frame barn has likewise been converted to a residential rental unit. A ca. 1955

of the 1930s and '40s. Although the house stood neglected for a number of years, it underwent a general renovation in 1987-88 and is in excellent

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cottage of undistinguished character is between the barn and the garage. The garage consists of a four-bay arcaded front designed by Bottomley. Other early outbuildings included a corn crib, stable and carriage house, and ice house all removed in the 1930s.

The present appearance of the grounds is largely the result of the work of a landscape architect, Rose Greely, the first student to receive a certificate in architecture from the Cambridge School. Employed by Rosa Tucker Mason in the 1930s, Miss Greely created the present axial entrance to the house from Spottswood Drive, replacing the original side entrance. The maples lining the Drive and the circle of boxwood at the end were part of the design. Elaborate formal gardens were laid out to the south of the house. The gardens have mostly disappeared but their outlines can be detected in the large boxwood bushes. The basic informality of the lawn to the west and north of the house was retained, preserving some large old trees.

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associated with William Lawrence Bottomley, an individual important in the history of American architecture.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The tract of land upon which Col Alto was constructed was purchased by James McDowell, Sr. (the father of Governor James McDowell), from the heirs of John Hoffman on 13 August 1819. The tract, which contained 328 acres, may have included the log cabin still standing there; at any rate, the structures on the property were valued at only \$100 until 1828, when their value increased to \$1,597.45. This indicates that the orginal part of the present structure was completed in 1827, the year that James McDowell, Sr., made a gift of the property to his son, James McDowell, Jr.

The younger McDowell was born in Rockbridge County in 1796. Educated at nearby Washington College and at Princeton, he settled for a time in Kentucky but returned to his native county in the early 1820s. He served in the House of Delegates of the Virginia General Assembly during the sessions of 1830 through 1834 and 1838. Throughout his legislative career, McDowell exhibited a strong interest in internal improvements; he proposed that the James River and Kanawha Canal be terminated and a railroad constructed from that point to the Ohio River. During the General Assembly session of 1831-1832, which followed Nat Turner's Rebellion in Southampton County, McDowell was one of Governor John Floyd's lieutenants who led the fight for abolition. McDowell gave what is considered one of his finest speeches during the debate, in which he "maintained that slavery was a cause of national dissension, that separation could not be peaceful, and that the separate existence of the slave states would be disastrous to their own welfare."

McDowell was elected governor of Virginia in 1842, took office on 5 January 1843, and served until 1 January 1846. During his tenure he continued to promote internal improvements; he also was the first Virginia governor to ban wine from official receptions.

Shortly after his term expired, McDowell was elected as a Democrat to the United States Congress, in which he served during the sessions from 1846 to 1851. When the Mexican War began he supported it and advocated the creation of the rank of lieutenant general to command the United States army, believing that the position would go to his brother-in-law, Thomas Hart Benton. This act of favoritism resulted in McDowell's defeat when he campaigned for the Senate in 1847. He was, however, returned to the House by his constituents. Known as an eloquent orator, McDowell spoke effectively against the Wilmot Proviso on two occasions. During his congressional career he suffered from poor health and twice suffered strokes. He died on 24 August 1851 at Col Alto.



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After McDowell's death the property changed hands several times. Among the subsequent owners were a minister, a professor of mathematics at Virginia Military Institute, and a New Orleans judge. On 15 October 1898 Col Alto was sold to Henry St. George Tucker.

Tucker was a member of a family with a long history of distinguished public service in Virginia. His father had been a member of Congress and a professor of law at Washington and Lee University; his grandfather had been a member of Congress; and his great-grandfather had been a professor of law at the College of William and Mary.

Henry St. George Tucker was born on 5 April 1853 at his father's home near Lexington. He was educated at Washington and Lee University and began his career as a lawyer in 1876. He was elected to Congress as a Democrat and served two long tenures, from 1889 to 1897 and from 1922 to 1932, as a Democrat. In 1897 he was appointed professor of constitutional and international law and equity at Washington and Lee University, succeeding his father in that position. Between 1899 and 1902 he served as dean of the law school; he also served as the acting president of the university from 1900 to 1902. He resigned in 1902 to become dean of the schools of jurisprudence, law, politics, and diplomacy at Columbia University (now George Washington University), in Washington, D.C. He also served as president of the American Bar Association in 1904 and 1905, when President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him president of the Jamestown Tercentennial Exposition.

11 He and his family resided in Norfolk until the exposition ended in 1907.

During his terms as congressman, Tucker was "regarded as one of the most ardent exponents of States rights and as one of the zealous defenders of the laissez-faire interpretation of the Constitution in Congress. . . [He] was opposed generally to the social and economic legislation of that period. . . . [He once said] 'When the power of the Government can be used to settle the guestion of competition in commercial life, the act becomes tyranny.'"

A conservative and wealthy man, Tucker also was religious and a practitioner of philanthropy at the local level. He served as an elder in the Lexington Presbyterian Church. Among his philanthropic contributions to Lexington was the purchase of a house for use as a nurses' residence by the Stonewall Jackson Memorial Hospital.

Tucker contracted influenza during his last term in Congress in 1932. He returned to Col Alto, where he gradually declined in health until he died on 23 July 1932. He willed Col Alto to his six children; on 26 November 1932 his eldest daughter, Rosa Tucker Mason, purchased her siblings' shares and made the property her home for the next twenty-eight years.

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ENDNOTES

- 1. Rockbridge County, Deed Book L, 1817-1819, Reel 6, pp. 520-523, Archives Branch, Virginia State Library and Archives, Richmond, Va.
- 2. John F. Pankow, "Col Alto," student paper, University of Virginia, 1986, p. 2; Cary A. Schneider, "'Col Alto': A Study of the Architecture and a Look at the Owners of one of Lexington's Finest Homes," student paper, University of Virginia, 1974, p. 5.
- 3. Pankow, 3.
- 4. Cynthia Leonard Miller, comp., <u>The General Assembly of Virginia</u>, <u>July 30, 1619-January 11, 1978: A Bicentennial Register of Members</u> (Richmond: Published for the General Assembly of Virginia by the Virginia State Library, 1978), 355-374, 384-386.
- 5. Allan Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., <u>Dictionary of American Biography</u> (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1937), 12:30.
- 6. Emily J. Salmon, ed., <u>A Hornbook of Virginia History</u>, 3d ed. (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1983), 79.
- 7. DAB, 12:31.
- 8. Schneider, 27-31.
- 9. Ibid., 32.
- 10. Ibid., 32-34.
- 11. Pankow, 26.
- 12. Quoted by Pankow from the <u>Congressional Record</u>, 67 Congress, 2nd Session.
- 13. Pankow, 29-30.
- 14. Ibid., 30-31.

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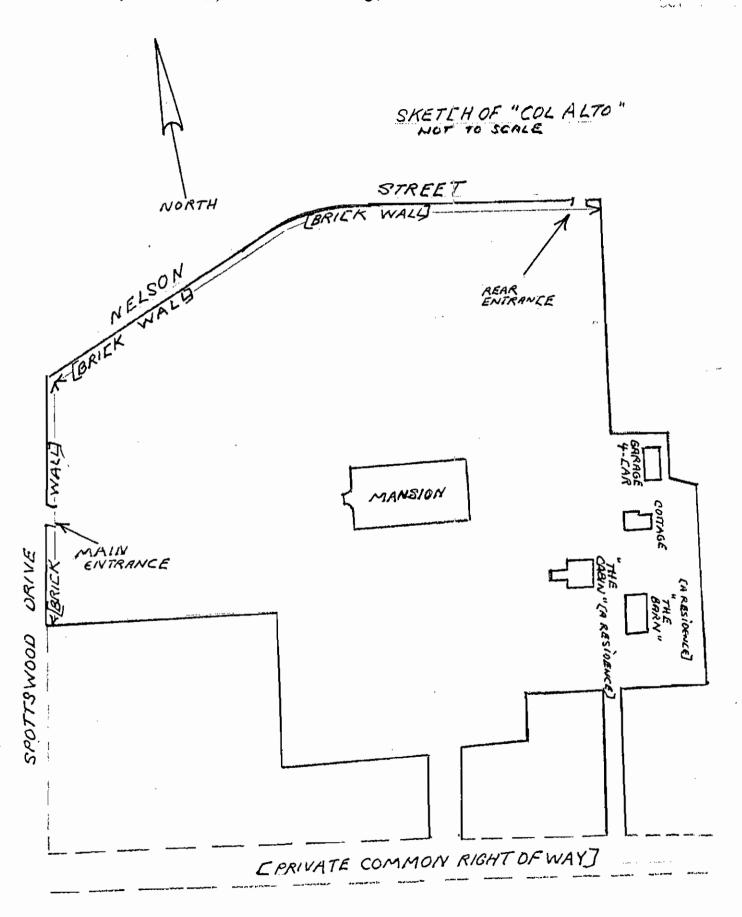
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Primary Sources

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Secondary Sources

- Johnson, Allan, and Dumas Malone, eds. <u>Dictionary of American Biography</u>. 20 vols. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928-1937.
- Miller, Cynthia Leonard, comp. The General Assembly of Virginia, July 30, 1619-January 11, 1978: A Bicentennial Register of Members. Richmond: Published for the General Assembly of Virginia by the Virginia State Library, 1978.
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- Schneider, Cary A. "'Col Alto': A Study of the Architecture and a Look at the Owners of one of Lexington's Finest Homes." Student paper, University of Virginia, 1974.



[STONEWALL JAEKSON HOSPITAL]

